

EPISODE #83
March 11, 1993

The Valley COMIC

N ♦ E ♦ W ♦ S

ENTERTAINMENT LISTINGS!!

STORIES:
BEYOND POLITIX
WHAT IN THE WORLD?
THE BOMBS BURSTING IN AIR
OUT OF POCKET EXPENSES
OTHER STUFF

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BRASS & FERN,
WILMINGTON,
EARTHWEEK



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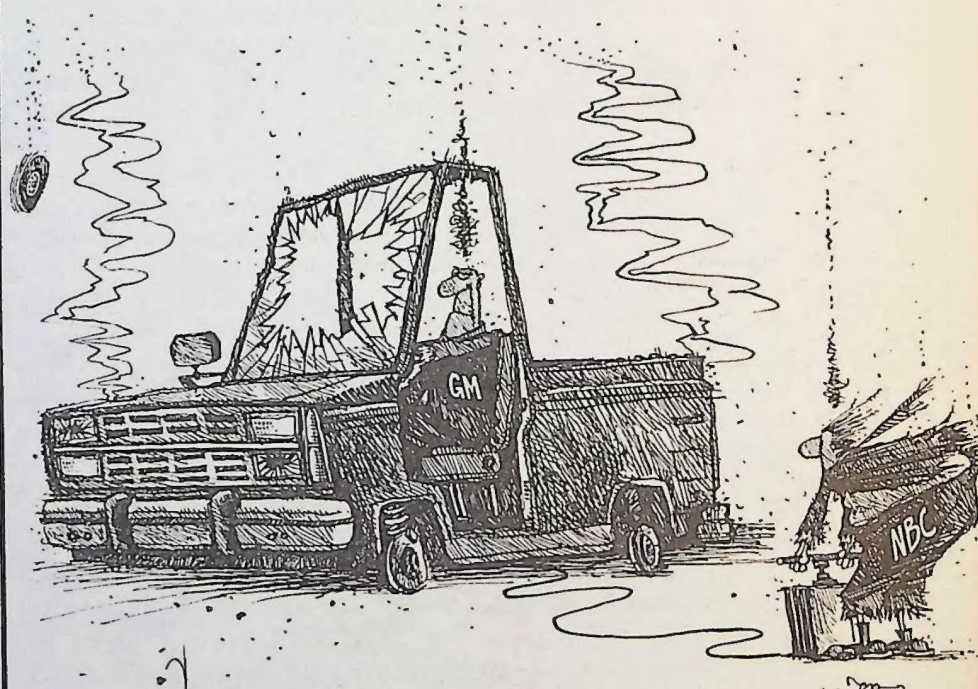
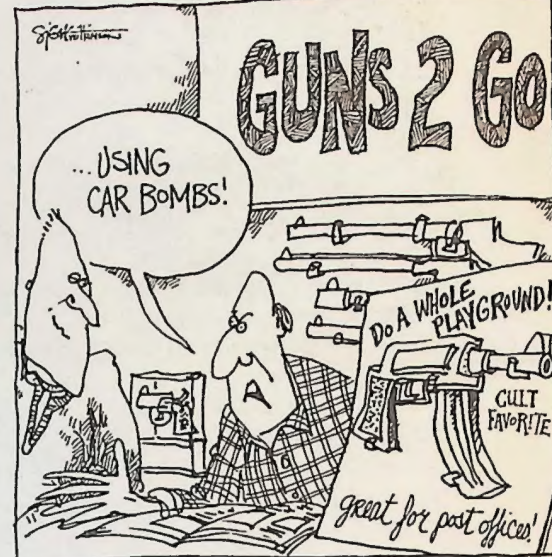
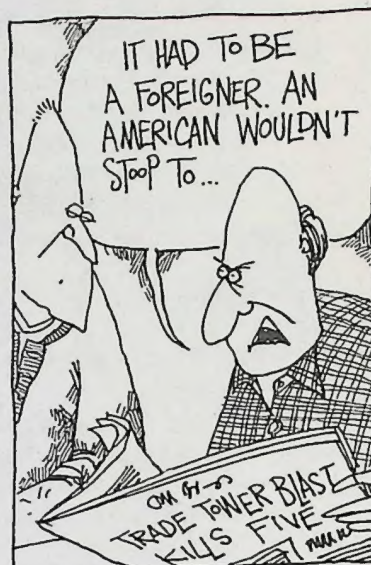
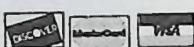
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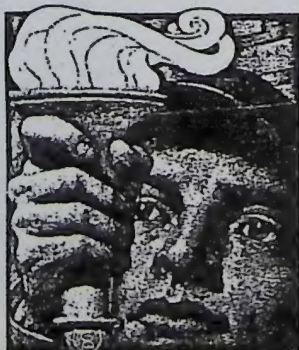
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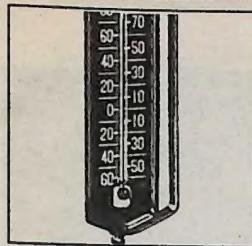
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PAGE THREE

by Mike Chrisman



I got sick recently. Like, who didn't? Oh, sure, I know whenever you tell somebody you're sick, you get, "...yep — lot o' that goin' around..." Doesn't matter what you've got. You could be the only sick person in a 3-county area for the last sixty days — *somebody's* gonna go, "My sister in Boston had the same thing, except her eyes were stuck shut."

But this time, people were really sick *everywhere*. Rehearsals, ball games, birthday parties all bit the dust. There were rumors that they almost closed the University of Massachusetts (Home of ... cough ... gasp ... hack ...) at Amherst because so many students got sick.

The bad news for me when I was sick was I had a newspaper to publish. That's right — this one. Even scarier, my Iron Woman assistant editor *also* went down for the count. So it was just me and a 103° fever, staring down a deadline. My friends reacted to this the only way they could: they went out and applied for pistol permits.

When the second production day came and my raw, fiery skin was so sensitive I could feel air molecules changing places in Connecticut, I felt like I had to do something. *Anything*. So I went to the drug store. They had this stuff on sale that was gonna relieve my fever, my cough, my flaming skin, my runny nose, my plantar warts, my anxiety at being the oldest child, and my poor math scores. At noon I took two capsules, like the box told me to, and in six hours I was supposed to take two more.

By about one-thirty I noticed I wasn't coughing any more, and my skin felt good enough that I could actually think about putting my clothes back on. Then half an hour later I was sitting at my computer and I turned my head just one millimeter, and this enormous avalanche of fluffy cotton crashed directly into my head. I thought about standing up, but decided that would mean death, or at least floating off the planet. So I assumed the fetal position for about an hour, until some helpful person started putting color back into familiar objects.

I have no idea how I got home, but I know at 3AM I was lying in bed, stark awake, trying to sleep by doing a backwards counting mantra that has never failed. Here's how *that* went: (breathe in) 596 (breathe out); (breathe in) 595 (breathe out); (breathe in) 594 — 594!! Say, that's a Chicopee exchange! I know *lots* of people in Chicopee! They have a big kielbasa festival there! Boy, would I love some kielbasa *right now*! I think I'll call my friend Mark! He used to live in Chicopee! Maybe he'll bring me some kielbasa! (breathe out). And after every breath I'm going, "No wonder they call it a *drug* store!" They should have the announcer from Woodstock coming over the PA: "Don't take the stuff in the red package...."

You know, friends — during the winter months you'll see hours of TV ads for flu remedies aimed at people "who can't afford to miss work." *Hours*. And they're all telling you *their* product will help you secure the Grimsby contract or direct midtown traffic or rivet girders on a skyscraper, even though you've got a desperate and angry virus raging through your veins. I'll tell you one thing: if the guy in the ads up on a 13th-story girder takes what *I* took, there's a 13th-story statistic by coffee break. If the cop in the intersection snarfs down *my* remedy, there's shredded blue uniform all over the highway by 9AM. Kids, I've learned my lesson, and it didn't even take a twelve-step program. It took a one-step program: *Quit taking this stuff!* I mean, it's not really *that* hard to work when you're sick. But it's *seriously* hard to work when you're on Pluto.

The Valley Comic News

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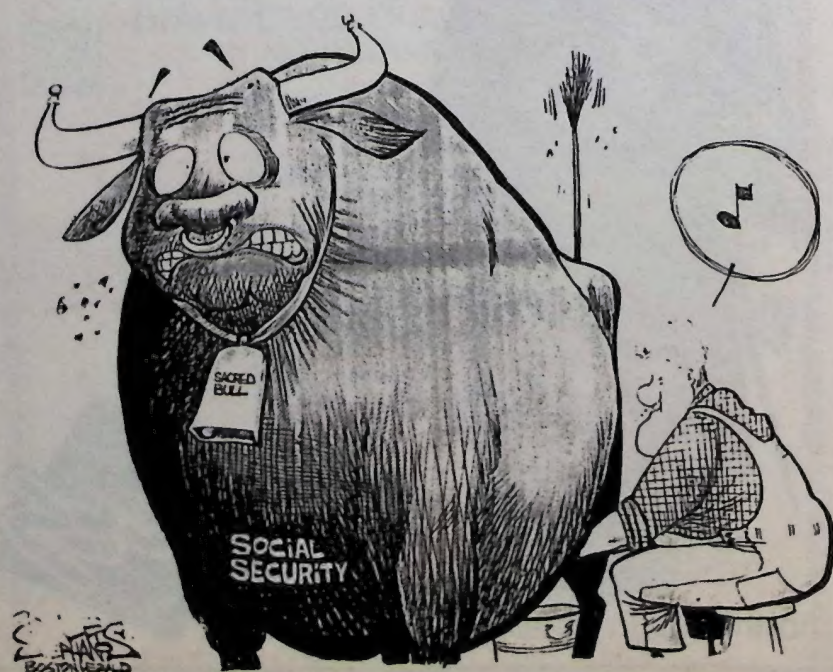
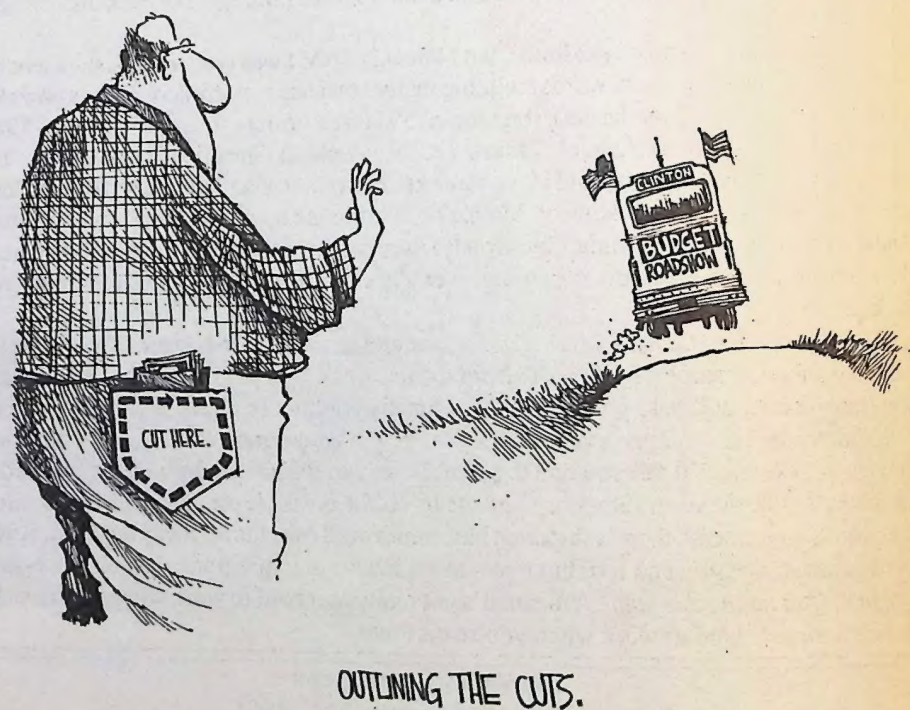
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Go to Faces... Solve Problems...

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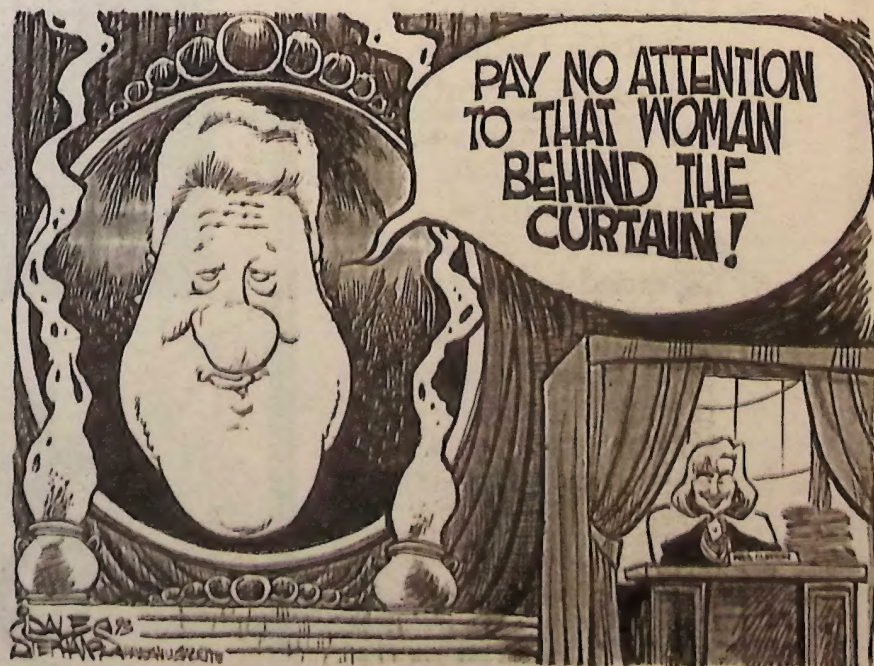
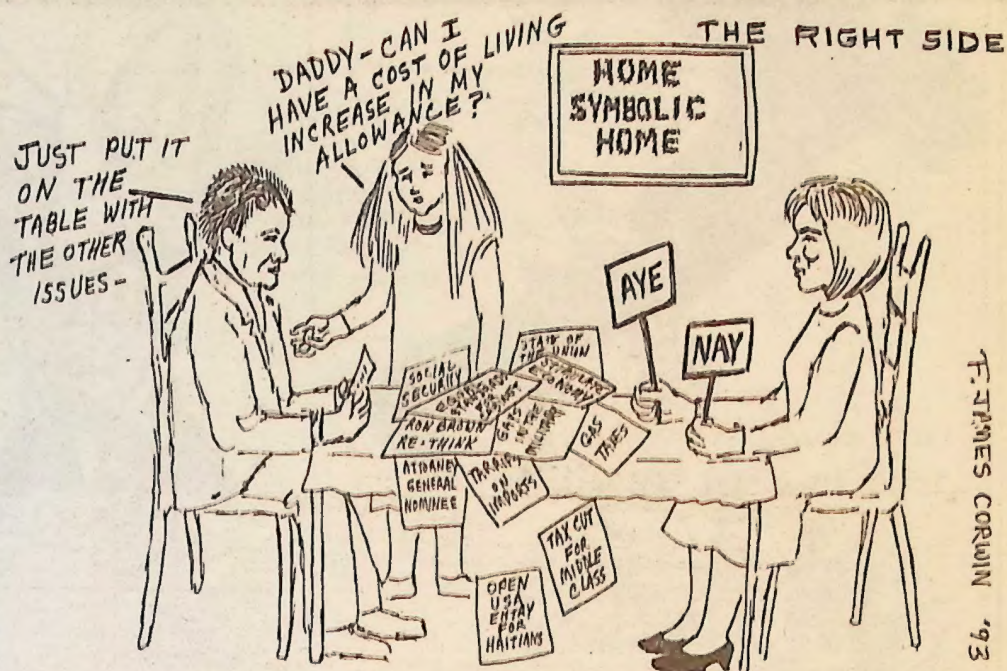
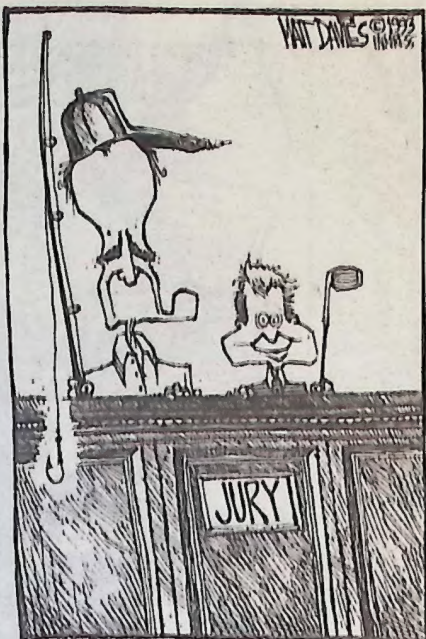
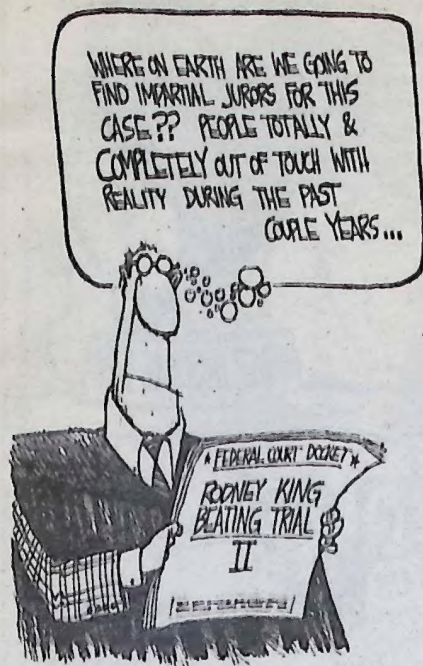
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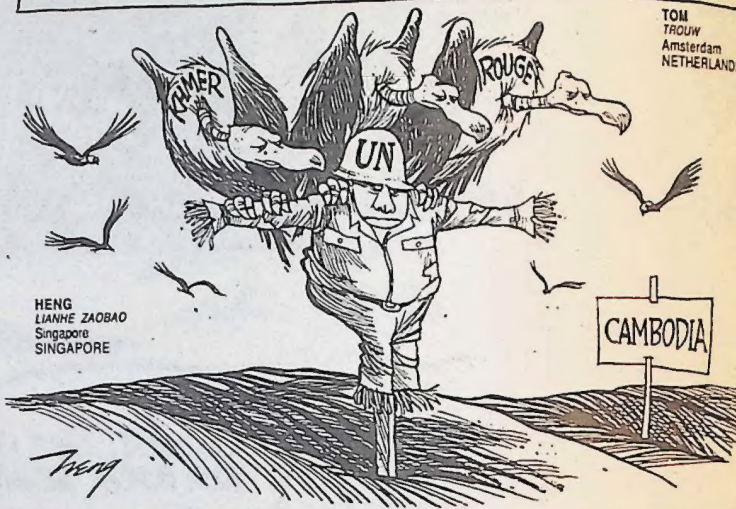
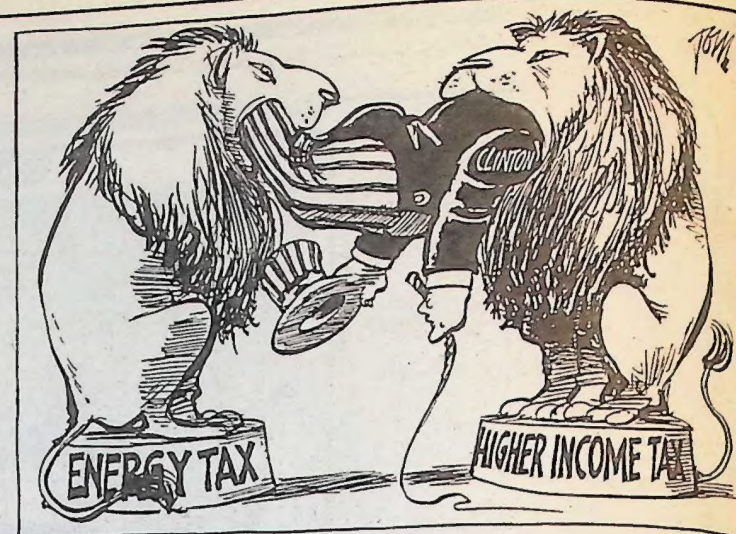


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VIEWS of the WORLD



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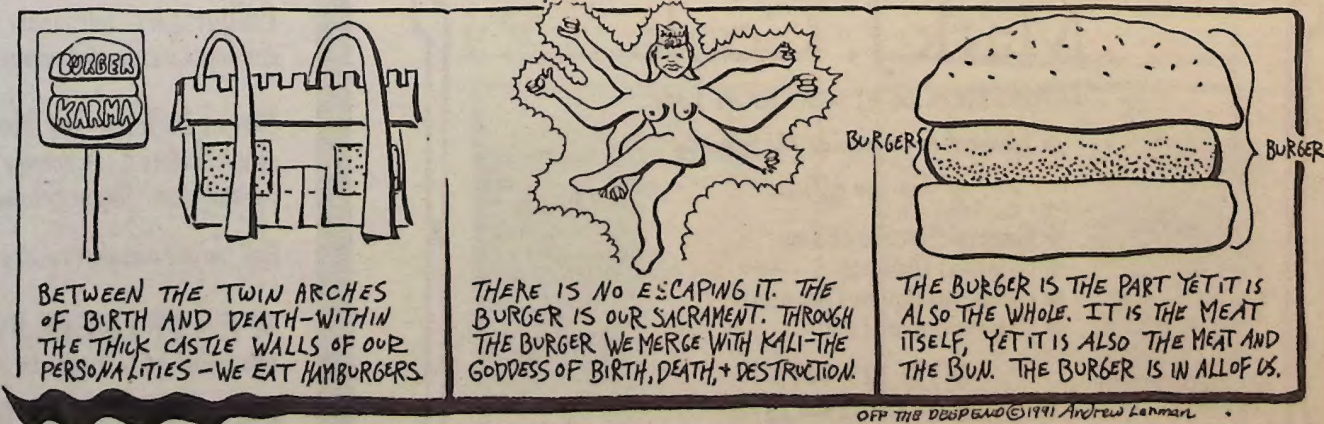
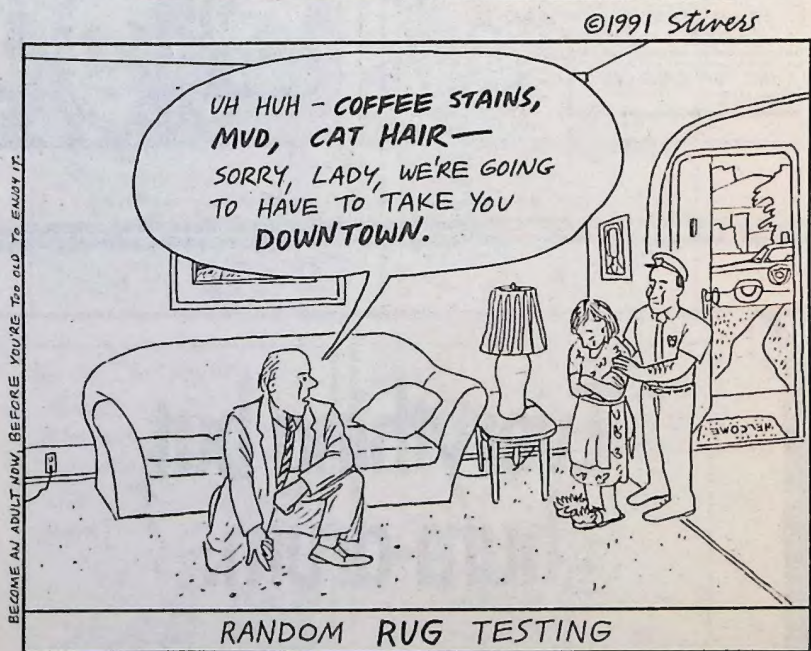
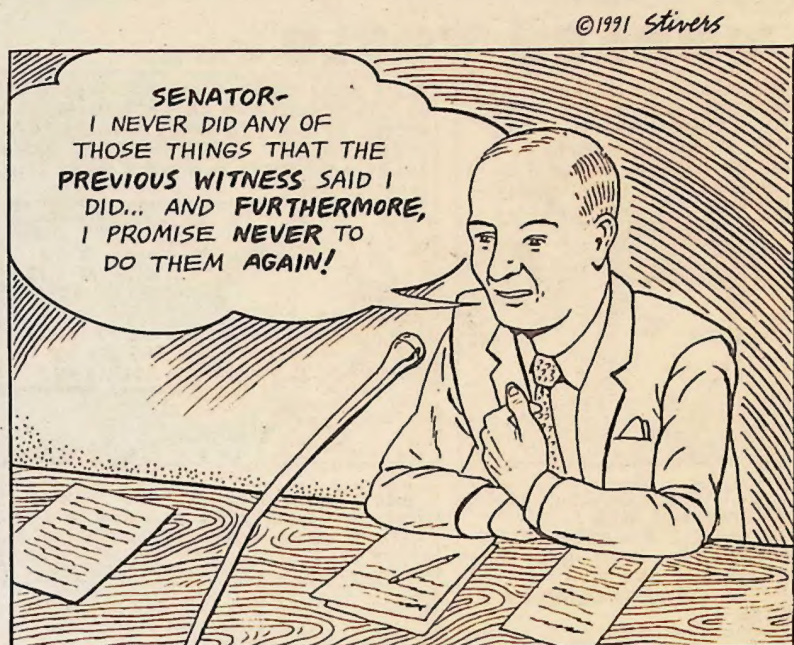
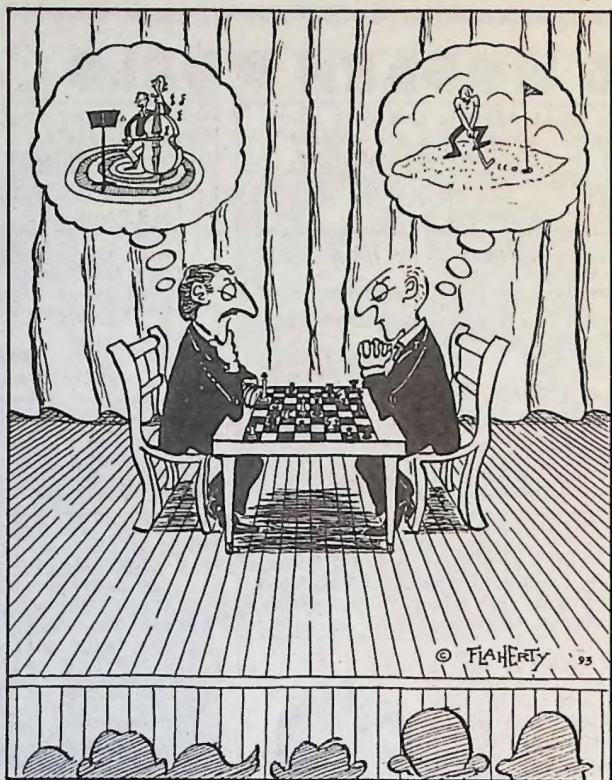
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THIS MODERN WORLD BY TOM TOMORROW

THIS MODERN WORLD

TM TOMORROW 3-2-93

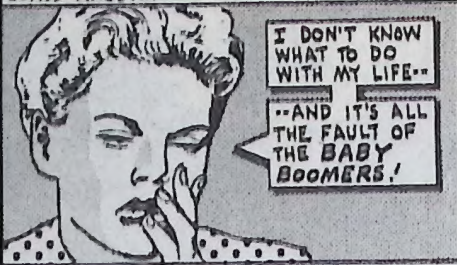
ACCORDING TO AN ENDLESS SUCCESSION OF OP-ED PIECES AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES, LIFE IS TOUGH FOR AMERICANS IN THEIR TWENTIES... SURE, THEY MAY NOT BE STARVING TO DEATH IN A BARREN DESERT... OR DODGING SNIPER FIRE IN A WAR-TORN COUNTRY... BUT GOSH DARN IT-- THEY JUST CAN'T FIND JOBS THEY LIKE!



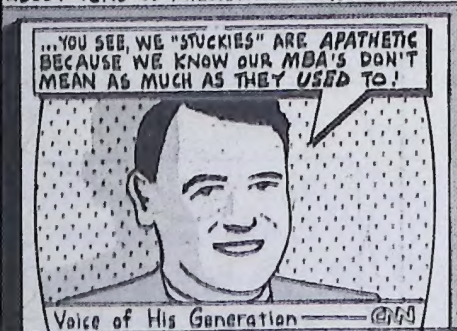
WE DOUBT THAT MOST PEOPLE IN THEIR TWENTIES ARE REALLY SO CONSUMED WITH SELF-PITY... AFTER ALL, TIMES ARE CLEARLY DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES... STILL, MANY PUBLICATIONS CONTINUE TO GIVE SPACE TO ANY YOUNG WRITER WHO CAN THINK UP A CLEVER NICKNAME FOR THEIR GENERATION--



THESE ARTICLES DESCRIBE TWENTYSOMETHINGS AS DISSATISFIED AND UNCERTAIN-- MUCH AS PEOPLE IN THEIR TWENTIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN... HOWEVER, THIS GENERATION HAS A HANDY SCAPEGOAT FOR THEIR MIDDLE-CLASS ANGST--



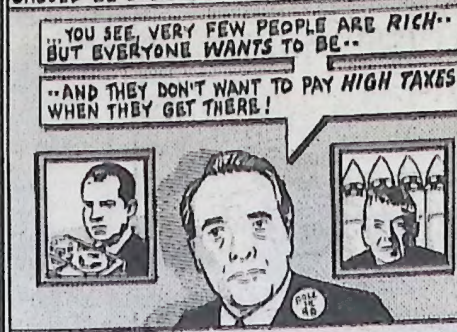
--AND WHO HAS SUFFICIENT CHUTZPAH TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR YEAR OF BIRTH QUALIFIES THEM TO MAKE SWEEPING GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT TENS OF MILLIONS OF STRANGERS--



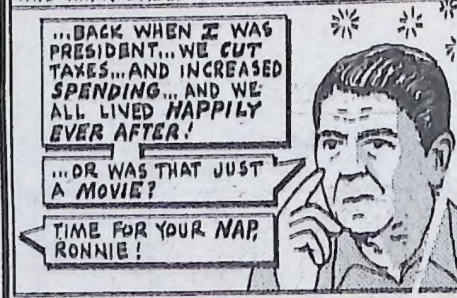
THIS MODERN WORLD

TM TOMORROW 3-2-93

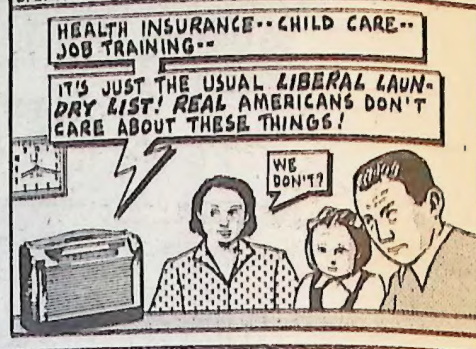
FOR TWELVE YEARS, REPUBLICANS HAVE MAINTAINED THAT TAX BREAKS FOR THE WEALTHY SHOULD BE SOCIETY'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE.



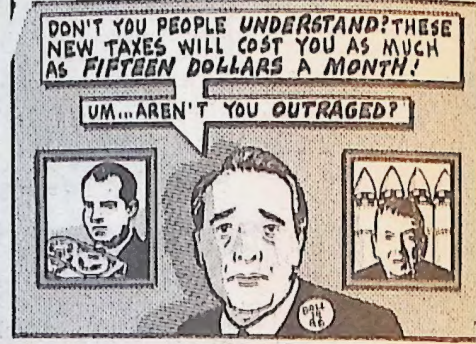
THE GOP IS OUT IN FORCE, INSISTING THAT, CONTRARY TO ALL EVIDENCE, THE EIGHTIES WERE A TIME OF SHARED PROSPERITY FOR EVERYONE... THE NEW YORK TIMES EVEN RAN AN OP-ED PIECE BY THE ONE MAN WHO MAY ACTUALLY BELIEVE THIS IMPROBABLE PARTY LINE...



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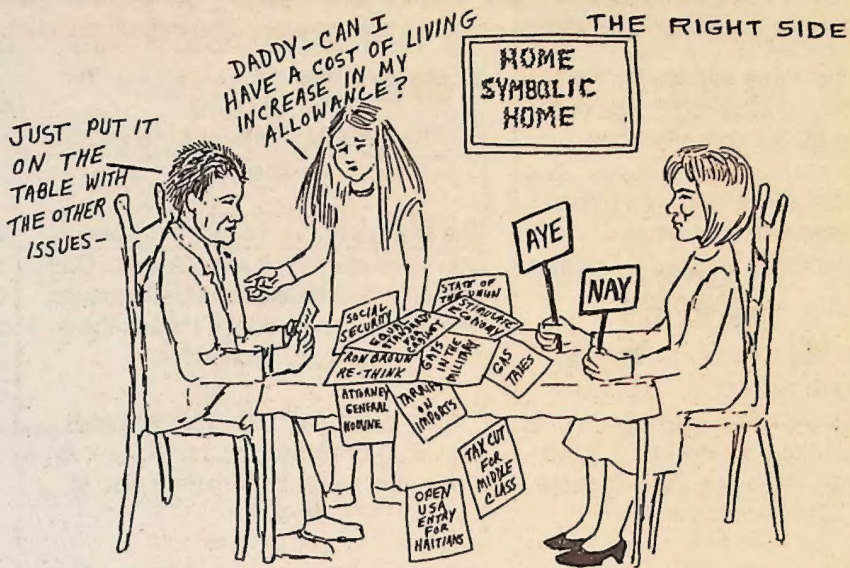
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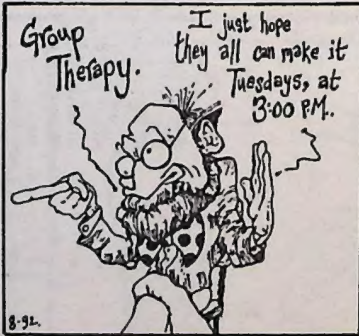
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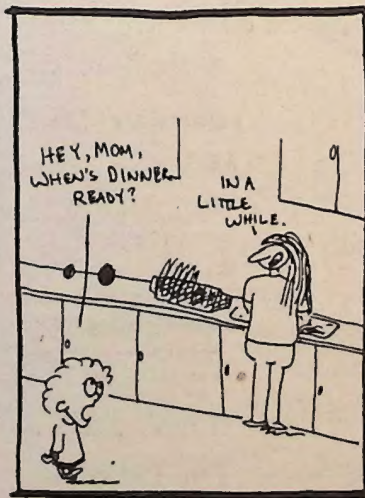
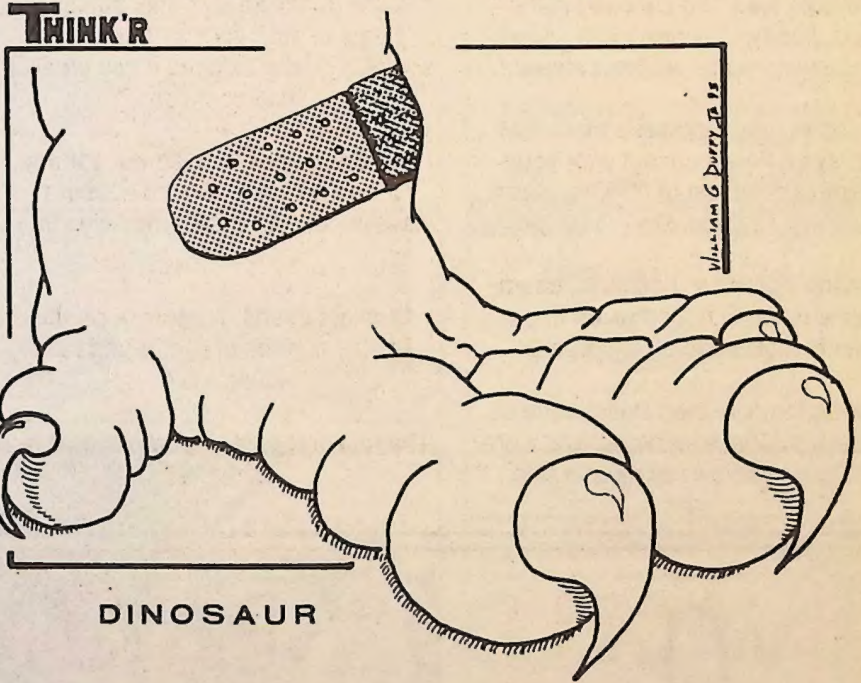
© P. Roudy, by Dr. Roudy Illustrations: K. Seidel.



dog feathers by Giles Hopkins



"AND WHEN I SAY 'JUMP' YOU'RE GONNA SAY, 'HOW FAR'?!"



TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT by L.M. Boyd

Florida law makes it illegal for a woman — whether single, divorced, or widowed — to parachute out of a plane on Sunday afternoon.

Q. Where and when were nylon stockings first sold?

A. In Wilmington, Delaware, October 24, 1939.

That corn-and-lima-beans dish called succotash lost one of its original ingredients over time. History records that when the Pilgrims learned this recipe from the native Americans, it also had cod in it.

Voltaire said, "To succeed in the world, it is not enough to be stupid; you must also be well-mannered."

In Japan, you can buy a clock that sprays a flowery scent over your sleeping head just before the alarm goes off.

In many European hospitals, champagne is the first food given to patients after abdominal surgery.

Among the dandified British men of the early 1800s were some who wore artificial eyebrows of mouse skin.

Q. Which cost more to build — the Excalibur Hotel in Las Vegas or the Hoover Dam?

A. The Excalibur. About \$115 million more.

The Malays are a philosophical people who have long dealt with danger. One of their proverbs states: "Just because the water is calm doesn't mean there aren't any crocodiles."

What is a slave? Novelist and poet Rosellen Brown suggests: "A slave is one who waits for someone else to free him."

A law in Alaska's Kodiak makes it illegal to stick your tongue out at somebody who catches a fish smaller than your fish.

The Galapagos tortoise will eat any food that's red. So zookeepers always put a tortoise's medicine in a tomato.

Sunlight exerts a pressure on the earth's surface of two pounds per square mile.

The first iron-clad ships were built by Koreans.

Q. My almanac says the only bridge in the world built just for sheep is over the Salt River northeast of Mesa, Ariz.

How wide is it?

A. One sheep wide.

A woman of retirement age writes: "I didn't make the bed this morning, for the first time in 50 years. I've always disliked making beds. Why do people every day of their lives go on doing things they don't like to do?"

The ancient Greeks outlawed the killing of people and the killing of dolphins with penalties of equal severity.

The law in Helena, Montana prohibits a woman from dancing on a saloon table if she has on less than 3 pounds 2 ounces of clothing.

It's a matter of record that Queen Victoria's doctors prescribed marijuana to relieve her cramps.

Q. Who invented the flashlight?

A. If you guessed Thomas Edison, you're right again.

Giant anteaters walk on their knuckles.

Ancient Egypt's Ramses II, as his annual personal sacrifice to the gods, gave 30,000 gallons of beer.

Computer runs on firearm records indicate the loaded gun in your house is 43 times more likely to kill you or a member of your family than to stand off some intruder.

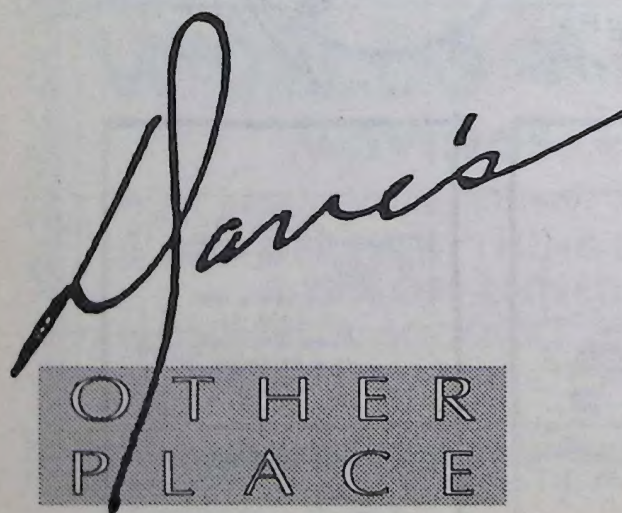
Parsley is poison to parrots.

Item 1493B in our Love and War files reads: "Almost all courting male mammals bite the object of their affection."

Early England's roads were dirt over clay. Wheels gouged ruts into them. Pottery-makers, needing cheap clay to make pots, dug for it in spots where the ruts were deep. Teamsters of the day named those spots for us: "pot-holes."

Medical experts claim you can't catch cold at the North Pole in winter. Temperatures there then are so low the standard organisms can't survive.

May is listed in some almanacs as "Play Your Own Harpsichord Month."



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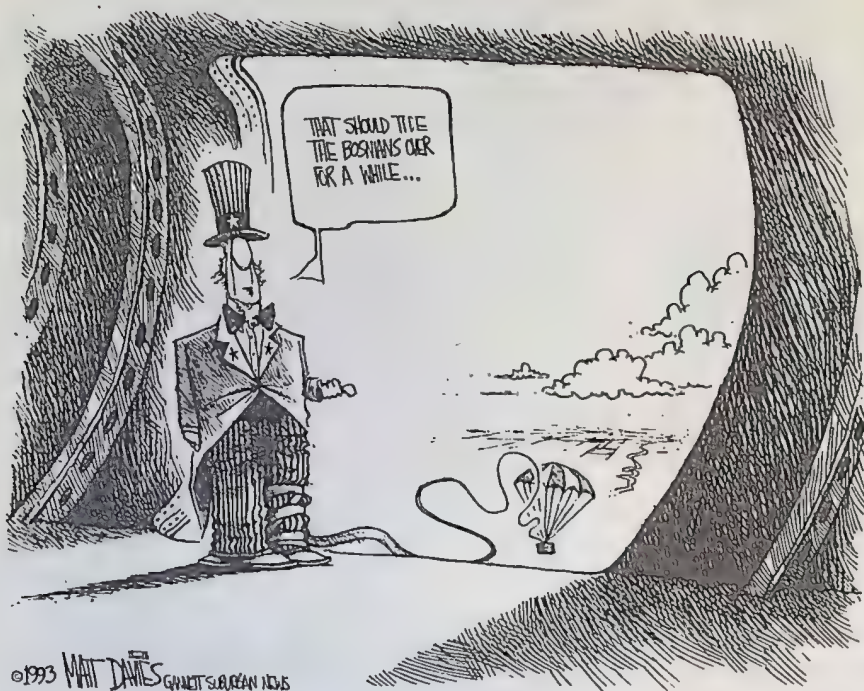
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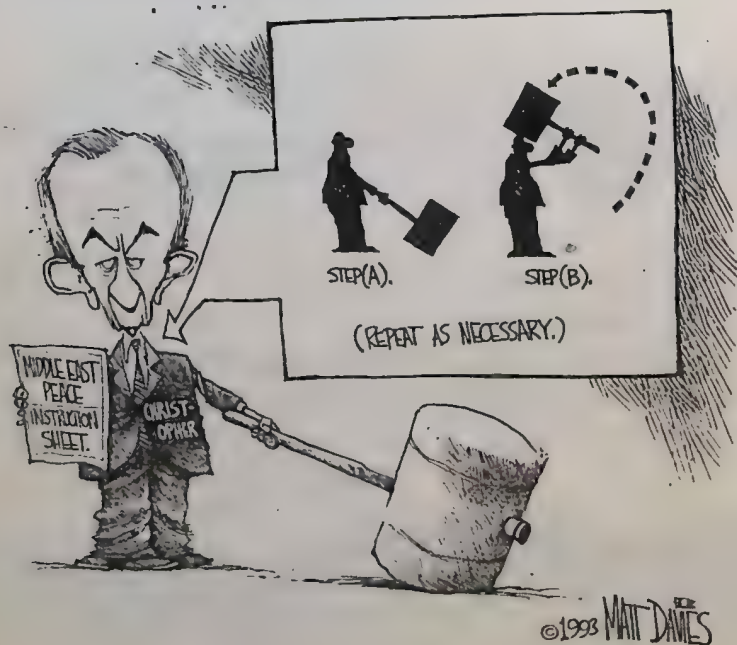
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WHAT IN THE WORLD?



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FRI
TWELVE

Alley Oops: Heroes In Trouble **Dave's Other Place:** Cafe Society **City Cafe:** DJ w/ dance music **Huke Lau/Comedy Connection:** Polynesian Show **Hotel Northampton:** Hal Benoit **Pearl Street:** Roomful of Blues **Iron Horse:** Kristen Hall, Justina & Joyce **Peking Garden/Humor Works:** "Funny Women" from NYC — Leslie Duncan, Teresa Melillo, Host: Shari Sabadosa **Baystate Hotel:** Rent Party, New Horizon **Green River Cafe:** Joan Crane **Vertex:** John Valby **Academy of Music:** The Crying Game **People's Institute:** Gideon Freudmann record release show

SAT
THIRTEEN

Vertex: Selectrocution **Baystate Hotel:** Baystate Cabaret: Pajama Slave Dancers, Hoola Popper, Pan Gloss, The #10, Raymond & The Circle **Green River Cafe:** Orrin Star **Hotel Northampton:** Charlie Schmidt, Chalyce Blair **Iron Horse:** Dan Hicks and his Acoustic Warriors **Pearl Street:** NRBQ, The Fools **Huke Lau/Comedy Connection:** Gilbert Gottfried **Alley Oops:** Heroes In Trouble **City Cafe:** DJ w/ dance music **Dave's Other Place:** Marion Groves **The Academy of Music:** The Crying Game **Peking Garden/Humor Works:** Julie Barr, Paul Elwell, plus special guests

SUN
FOURTEEN

Iron Horse: Pancho Sanchez Band **Green River Cafe:** Freyda and the Atta Boys (featuring Freyda Epstein from Trapezoid) **Vertex:** The Lost **Northampton Center for the Arts:** Artists' reception for 2nd annual art auction (free) **Academy of Music:** The Crying Game

MON
FIFTEEN

Baystate Hotel: Blue Monday, w/ Ed Vadas **The Academy of Music:** The Crying Game **Iron Horse:** Maddy Prior **Northampton Center for the Arts:** Readers & Writers, Live! — an evening of "sudden fiction" w/ Carol Edelstein, Peter Nelson (free)

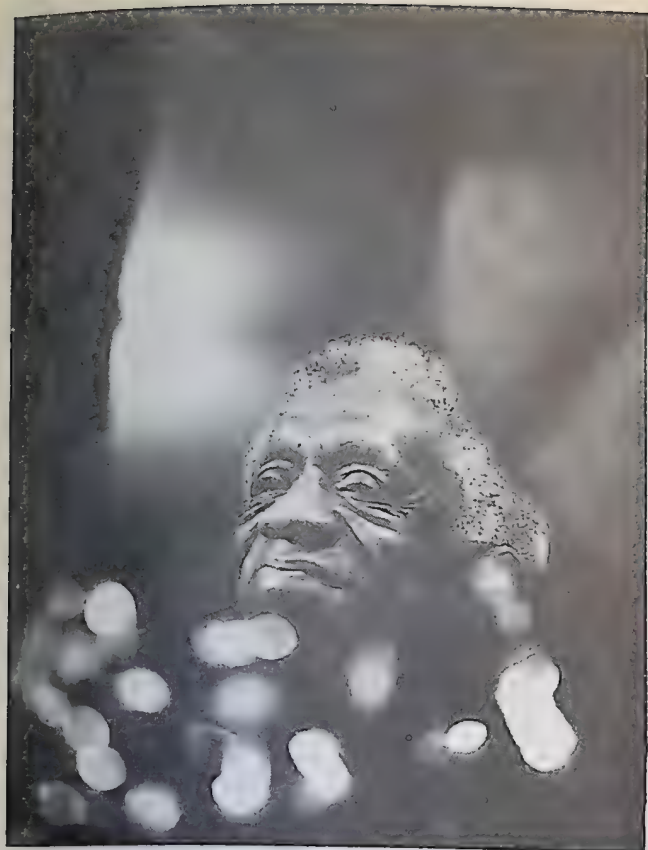
TUE
SIXTEEN

Iron Horse: Art Steele Blues Band
The Academy of Music: The Crying Game



WED
SEVENTEEN

Vertex: Reggae: New Horizon **The Academy of Music:** The Crying Game
Green River Cafe: Cynthia Whitney & friends — Irish music and food **Dave's Other Place:** George Lenker
Iron Horse: The Big Bad Bollocks w/ special guest **Baystate Hotel:** St. Pats' Day Extravaganza



The late, great Art Blakey, in his last appearance at The Iron Horse Tobey photo



THU
EIGHTEEN

Vertex: Selectrocution **Iron Horse:** Belly, Foo **Alley Oops:** All Request w/ DJ Bobby C. **City Cafe:** DJ w/ dance music **Dave's Other Place:** Ed Vadas & The Fabulous Heavyweights **Baystate Hotel:** Mark Nomad **Pearl Street:** Back In Black (AC/DC tribute) **The Academy of Music:** The Crying Game **Peking Garden/Humor Works:** Georgia Ragsdale (from Provincetown: special Thursday show)

FRI
NINETEEN

Baystate Hotel: Urban Family Band **Hotel Northampton:** Jac Veronesi, Tom Savoy **Dave's Other Place:** Susan Duncan & The Boys of Blues **Green River Cafe:** David Massengill **Alley Oops:** The Roosters **Pearl Street:** The Bombastics **City Cafe:** DJ w/ dance music **Iron Horse:** Allen Ginsberg **Vertex:** Moriah

SAT
TWENTY

Alley Oops: The Edge **Dave's Other Place:** Tony Vacca & Tim Moran **City Cafe:** DJ w/ dance music **Hotel Northampton:** Charlie Schmidt, Chalyce Blair **Green River Cafe:** Marianne Chatterton **Baystate Hotel:** Songwriters' Showcase II: Rob Skelton, The Herschlers Brothers, Chris O'Connor, Amy Fairchild **Pearl Street:** Bear Mountain **Vertex:** Selectrocution

SUN
TWENTYONE

Alley Oops: New Country w/ DJ Mike P.
Vertex: Rain
Iron Horse: Malathini and the Mahotella Queens

MON
TWENTYTWO

Baystate Hotel: Blue Monday, w/ Ed Vadas
Iron Horse: Pierre Bensusan
Pearl Street: King Missile, Monks of Doom, Those Melvins

TUE
TWENTYTHREE

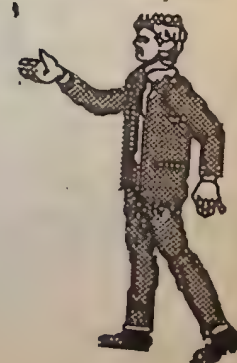
Iron Horse: Albert Collins and the Icebreakers, The Radio Kings

WED
TWENTYFOUR

Iron Horse: Nashville Bluegrass Band
Vertex: Reggae: New Horizon
Northampton Center for the Arts: Readers & Writers, Live! — Mona Simpson
Baystate Hotel: The Puppet Museum

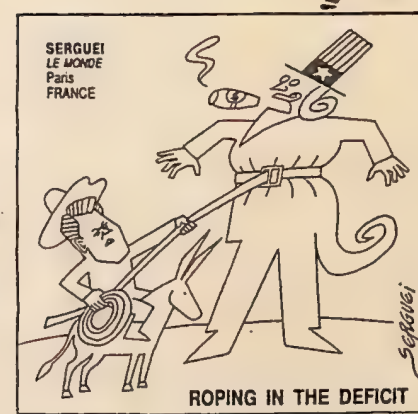
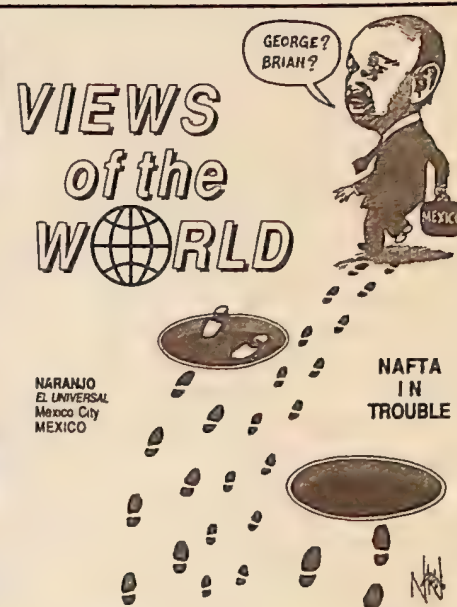
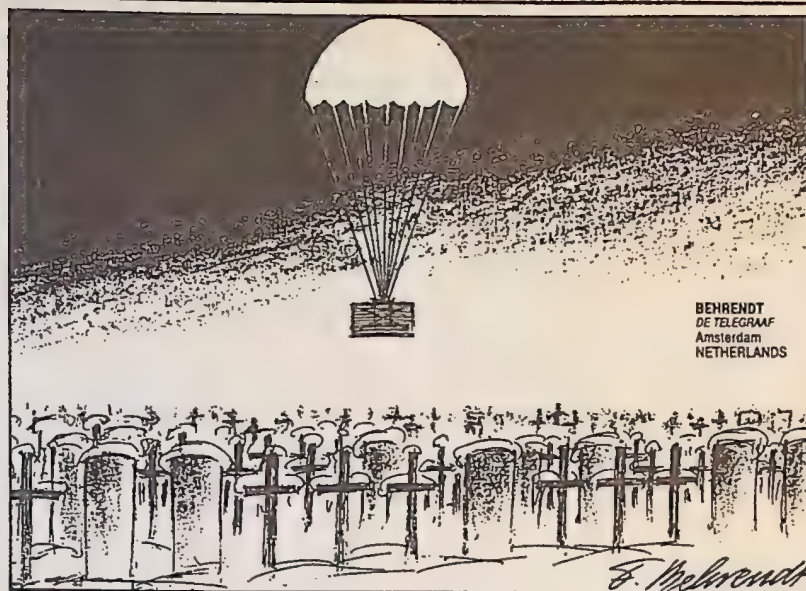
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JOE BOB BRIGGS

For several weeks now I've been haunted by the weird, macabre, and downright scary story of The Missing Soft Drink Machine. I can't think of anything else. I think about it all the time.

Tell me if this doesn't sound like a Stephen King story to you.

One morning the residents of Inavale, Nebraska — population 100 — get out of bed and discover that the town's only soft-drink machine, a Pepsi machine, is *gone*. Vanished. It has disappeared from the place along US Highway 136 where it had stood for years, right in front of a "downtown" building.

People are upset. People are "disgusted," to use the words of Kyla Maudlin, who runs the Gala Gardens nursing home in Inavale. People are lost and disoriented.

Because that Pepsi machine was the only place to buy a soft drink in the whole town. There's no grocery store in the town. There's no gas station. There's no post office. There's no restaurant or Dairy Queen. And so the Pepsi machine, standing alone beside the highway, was the social center of the town — where everybody hung out, especially the farmers who drove in from the fields.

The soul of the town had been

stolen.

It gets worse.

First of all, there's no way to get a new Pepsi machine. The townspeople put in a call to the Pepsi distributor 48 miles up the road in Hastings, Nebraska, the nearest big town (population 22,000). But they say it probably won't be replaced. It's an \$1,800 machine, and it will take a *whole* lot of quarters from the people of Inavale to break even on a new one.

So the residents of Inavale grew restless. It was not a pleasant sight to see otherwise cheerful farmers driving their pickups an extra six miles west to Riverton, or seven miles east to Red Cloud (home of the "Willa Cather Pioneer Museum"), just to get their daily Pepsi. I'm sure that many of them converted to Coke as a matter of principle.

Enter Deputy Sheriff Sandi Disney. (I'm not making up these names.)

Through routine police work, the Pepsi machine was recovered by Deputy Sheriff Disney one week later. There it was, lying in a ditch four miles from town, bashed, broken, all the change gone. In fact, it was found on a narrow county road, leading to suspicions that a *local* did it.

This depressed the town even

further, leading to "public clamor," according to the Omaha *World-Herald*. Exactly what the public clamor was for was unspecified. A Pepsi boycott perhaps? The formation of a posse? A vigilante committee to interrogate suspicious characters in the middle of the night? They could stick flaming torches in front of their faces and say, "If you know what's good for you, you'll tell us *everything* you know about the Pepsi machine."

Unfortunately, Deputy Sheriff Disney could come up with no suspects.

And there's one more thing that haunts me about this story. When they found the lost machine, and hauled it over to the Webster County jail in Hastings, police noticed that all of the change had been stolen, and *some* of the soft drinks had been stolen. But a few cans were left behind.

Did the robber get scared after stealing the first 50 Pepsis and run? Was it a soft-drink-robbery-for-hire, with specific instructions to steal *only* Pepsi and not the less desirable Mountain Dew or Dr. Pepper? Or did the robber, as I prefer to think, leave the cans behind on purpose, as a sort of clue? Is he toying with us? Is it a brazen message? "Here, drink a few of these Pepsis that I'm leaving behind — but know who left

'em here — because I'm the one who controls the Pepsis in this town now. And don't you ever forget it."

Or is it one of those alien things? Cattle mutilations, patterns in wheat fields, UFOs in the shape of flying cigars ... "Our planet is dying. We need Pepsis to fertilize our women. And *you're going to give them to us!*"

You see how I can't shake this story?

Note to readers in Western Nebraska: Please send more information.

What if the robber was just *real* thirsty, like he'd smoked a lot of marijuana or something, but he didn't have any money? *Wait! I know!* He was *drunk*, and he was driving down Highway 136, and he *grazed* the Pepsi machine with his bumper, and then he had to *get rid of it* so nobody would know he'd had a collision with a Pepsi machine in the middle of nowhere.

Maybe it was very short people who couldn't reach the quarter slot, and so they had to knock it on its side, but then it caused a lot of noise, and

Somebody stop me! Please!

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EARTHWEEK: A DIARY OF THE PLANET


By Steve Newman

Floods

 Flood waters spilled over their banks along parts of a 90-mile stretch of the Gila River in western Arizona, washing out bridges and inundating most of the winter lettuce grown in the U.S. Isolated farmhouses and huge farm machines sat abandoned in several feet of water near fields where crews had labored in vain to save the crop.


Iran announced that about 400 people have been killed and 224 left missing by recent floods which hit 12 southern provinces. The report said 1,050 bridges were destroyed, 25,000 acres of farmland swamped and 220,000 head of livestock washed away. International relief agencies are rushing aid and supplies to the region.

El Niño

 Measurements from a U.S.-French ocean research satellite indicate that the El Niño warm water ocean phenomenon, which seemed to end last July, is growing stronger again. Scientists announced the discovery of a huge pool of warm water that expanded from west to east across the tropical Pacific during December. The greatest warmings should reach the coasts of Peru and Ecuador within the next few weeks.

Last year's El Niño episode brought flooding and heavy crop damage from northwest Mexico to Texas. The effects this season appear to be further to the northwest in drought-breaking storms for California and the current disastrous flooding in western Arizona.

Eruption


 The Philippines' Mayon Volcano belched ash up to a half-mile into the sky while volcanic debris, loosened by heavy tropical rains, rolled down its slopes. Abandoned huts were buried by up to 10 feet



of mud, and several roads were blocked by slides.


Nearly 300 miles to the north, activity within Mount Pinatubo prompted scientists to raise the state of alert around the volcano. Vulcanologists believe that building pressure means a fresh eruption may occur within weeks.

Winter's Worst

 A blustery winter storm dumped up to a foot of snow over parts of northern Spain and southern France. Thirty-nine mountain passes were closed and police escorted cars in convoys over the main Perihus mountain pass. The storm brought the season's first snow flurries to Barcelona on the Mediterranean coast.


Record snowfall in the Sierra Nevada has become so high that morticians have been forced to keep bodies on ice; the snowpack is too deep to allow burials. Backhoes can't be used in Truckee, Cal, because other graves and headstones are obscured under about 80 inches of snow.

Tropical Storms

 An area of disturbed weather brought torrential rainfall to the French Indian Ocean territory of Reunion before developing into tropical cyclone Ionia around Madagascar. Reunion was drenched with more than 26 inches of rainfall, while parts of Madagascar were swamped with between 11 and 14 inches. Neighboring Mozambique experienced severe flooding along its coastal region.


Tropical cyclone Polly skirted New Caledonia, packing maximum winds of 95 miles per hour.

Earthquakes

 The most powerful quake to strike Poland this century shook the Carpathian Mountains in the south of the country without causing significant damage. A strong jolt was felt on the island of Flores near where a deadly temblor killed more than 2,000 people almost three months ago.

Otherwise, worldwide seismic activity was unusually low.

Squirrel Hazard

 Authorities at a California weapons depot said the bases's safety is threatened by an army of squirrels whose tunnels have weakened buildings and weapons storage structures. Concord Naval Weapons Station spokesman Dan Tikalsky said the rodents have also burrowed beneath roads in a 5,000-acre part of the facility that serves as a major military armory. Authorities said the seemingly endless series of tunnels have weakened safety structures designed to withstand accidental explosions, creating a potential hazard. The public is being asked for ideas on how to eradicate the pests without resorting to poison, which could pollute the area. Additional Sources: Meteor France forecast office at Reunion, U.S. Climate Analysis Center, U.S. Earthquake Information Center, and the World Meteorological Organization.

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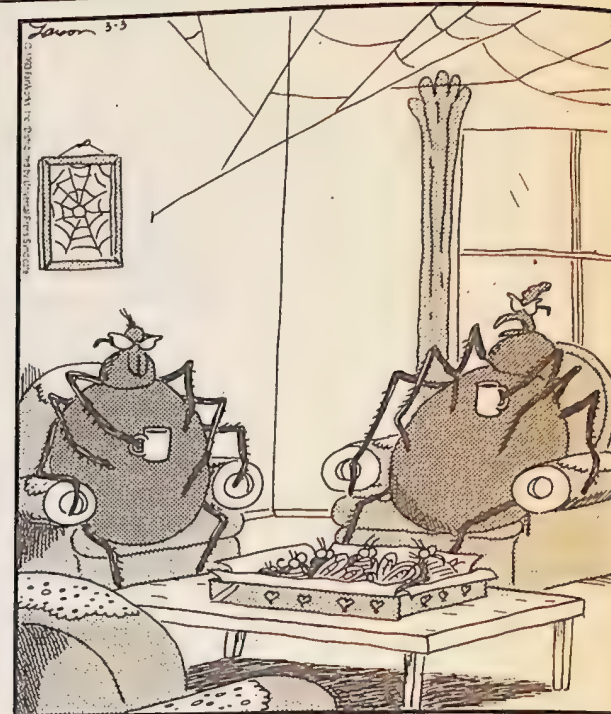
By GARY LARSON



That evening, with her blinds pulled, Mary had three helpings of corn, two baked potatoes, extra bread and a little lamb.



On this particular day, Rory the raccoon was hunting frogs at his favorite stream, and the pleasant background music told him that Mr. Mountain Lion was nowhere around.



"Oh, the box of dead flies? Ramone gave them to me Saturday night during his courtship display. ... Of course, they were already sucked dry."



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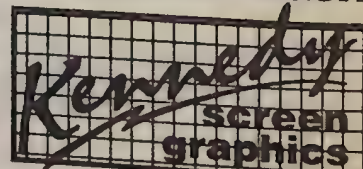
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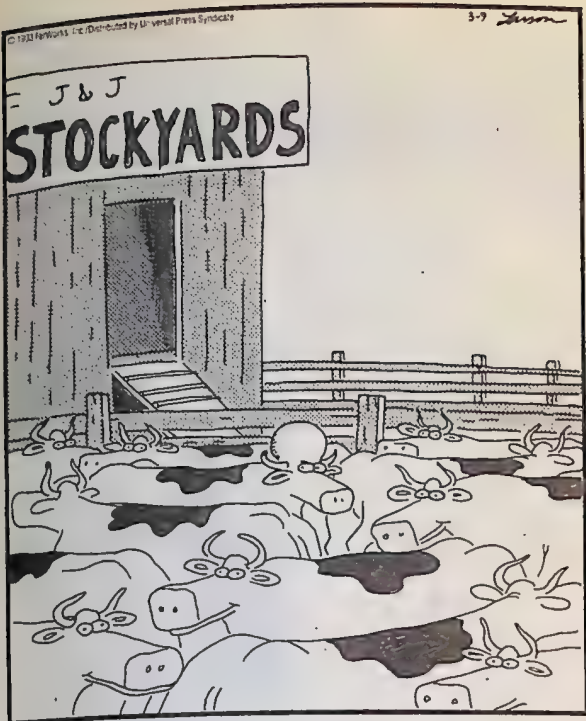
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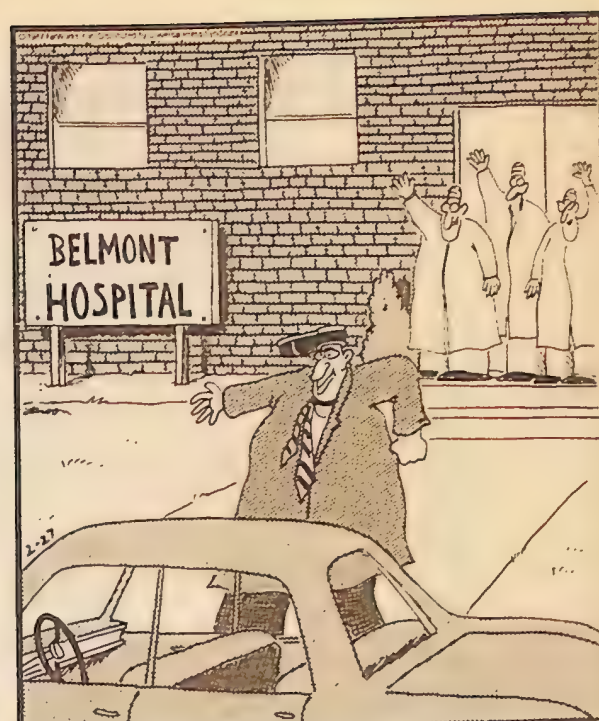




Only Claire, with her oversized brain, wore an expression of concern.



"It wasn't me, Dad! It was Randy's musk glands!"



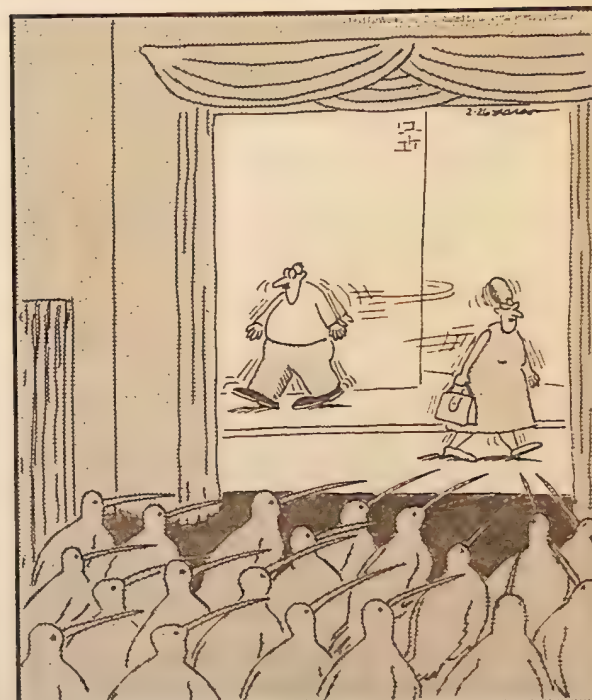
Gus Ferguson: Recipient of the first brain bypass operation.



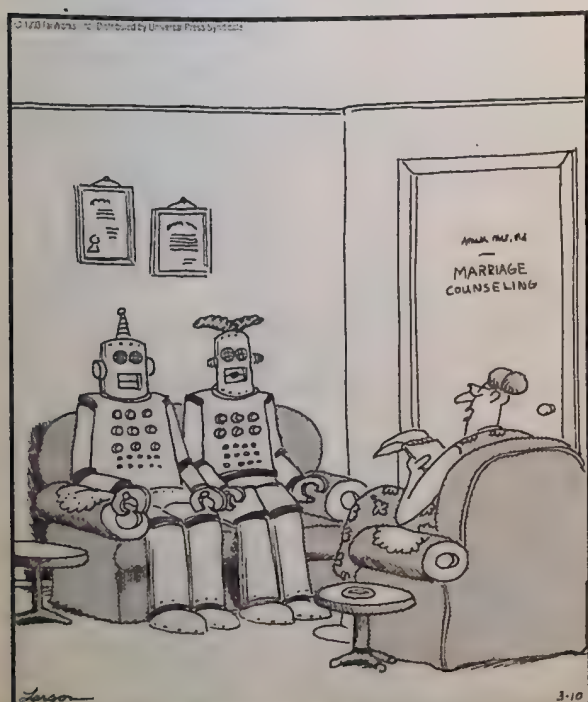
"Hey! You! ... Yeah, you! I ain't gonna tell you again to quit spittin' on me!"



"Norm? This is Mitch. ... You were right — I found my drill."



Hummingbirds, of course, have to watch nature films with the action greatly speeded up.



"The problem, as I see it, is that you both are extremely adept at pushing each other's buttons."



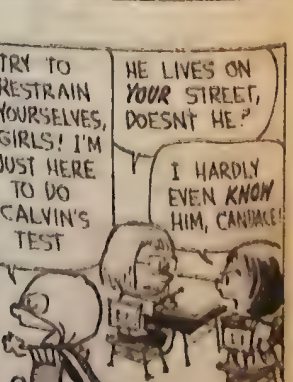
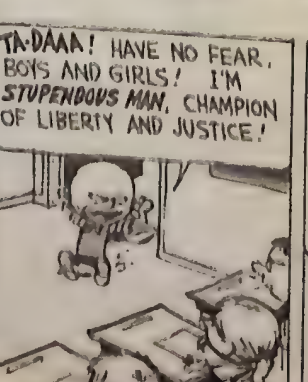
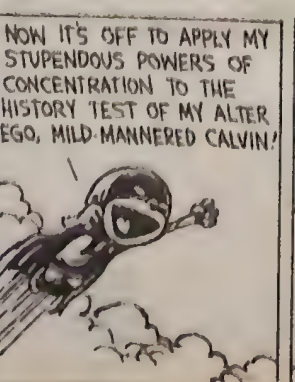
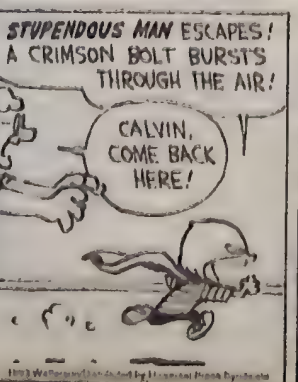
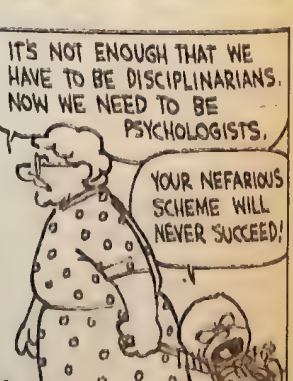
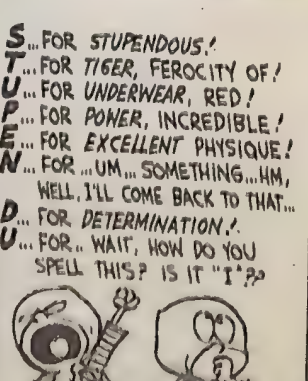
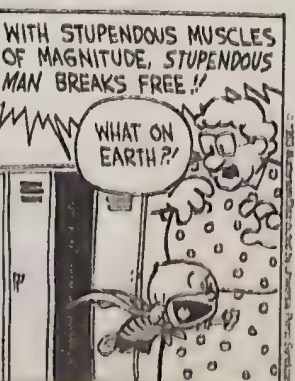
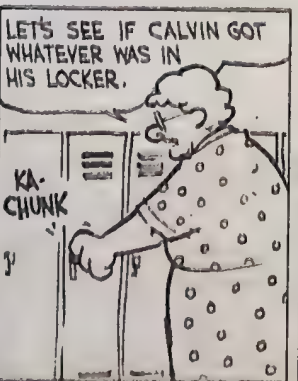
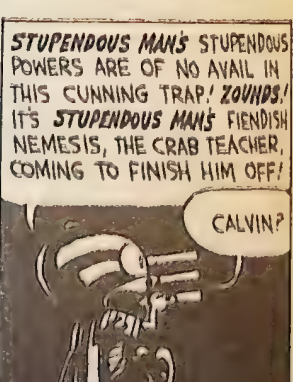
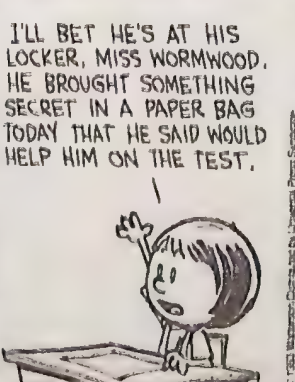
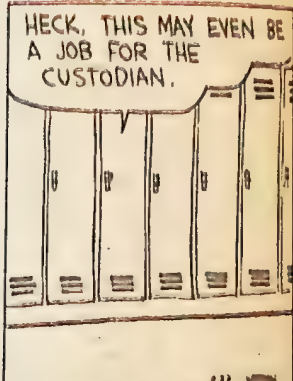
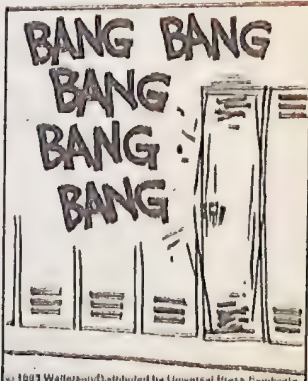
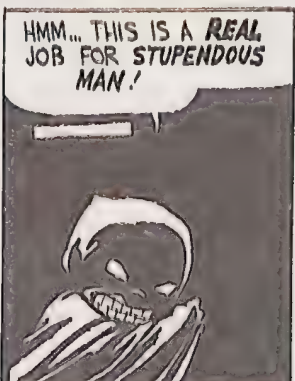
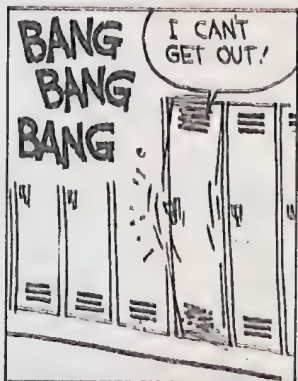
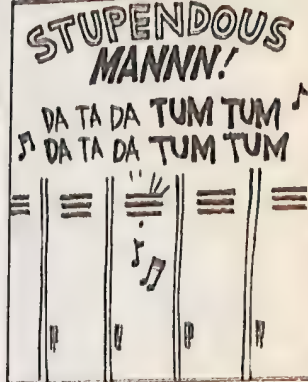
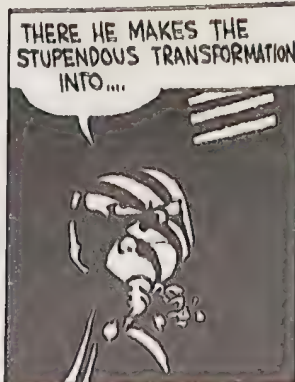
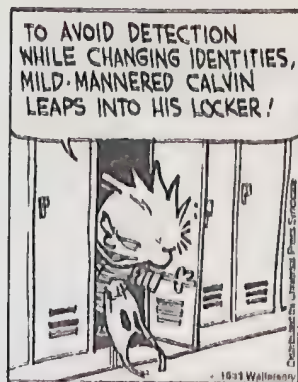
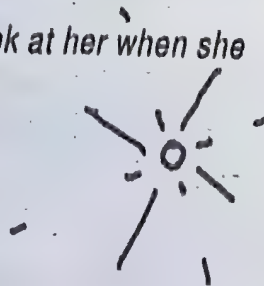
"Several more deaths have been reported in the neck area, and although the authorities won't comment, residents are blaming the new collar."



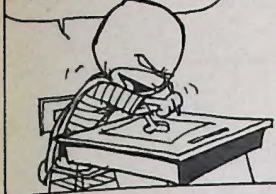
calvin and Hobbes

by BILL WATSON

I think
knowledge is sacred
babes are sacred
the morning air is sacred
the river is sacred
the marsh is sacred
the way my girlfriend walks is
sacred
the way I look at her when she
walks is not sacred.



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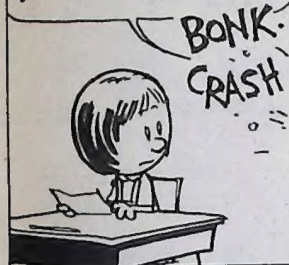
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CLASS, DID CALVIN COME IN HERE? HAS ANYONE SEEN HIM?



AAUGH! LET GO! LET GO! YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG GUY! I'M CALVIN! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!



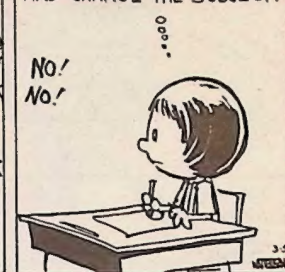
I JUST GOT A DRINK OF WATER! YOU SAID I COULD! **STUPENDOUS MAN** IS THE ONE YOU WANT! I'M NOT HIM! HELP! HELP!



CLASS, YOU SAW STUPENDOUS MAN! TELL MISS WORMWOOD! **ARRGGH!** HELP! I'VE BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED!



WHEN MOM ASKS ME HOW MY DAY AT SCHOOL WAS, I ALWAYS JUST SAY, "FINE," AND CHANGE THE SUBJECT.



SO THE TEACHER TOLD MOM, AND MOM HIT THE ROOF AND TOOK AWAY MY COSTUME.



..UM... HAS STUPENDOUS MAN EVER WON A BATTLE?



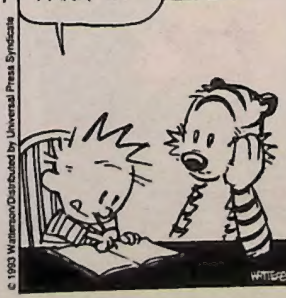
LOOK, HOBBS. THERE'S A QUIZ IN MY NEW ISSUE OF **CHEWING MAGAZINE**. "DOES YOUR GUM DELIVER? 10 QUESTIONS SHOW WHAT YOU COULD BE MISSING!"



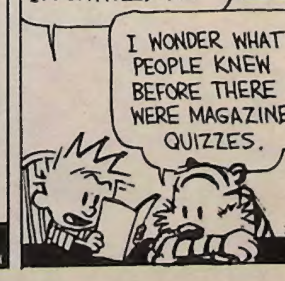
LET'S SEE HOW MY GUM DOES. "1. HOW HARD IS YOUR GUM AT THE BEGINNING?
A) ROCK-LIKE OR BRITTLE
B) PLEASANTLY FIRM
C) SQUISHY OR BENDY"



HMM... MY GUM IS PRETTY HARD AT FIRST. I'LL MARK "A."



GOSH, I'VE GOT NEGATIVE FIVE POINTS ALREADY! I'M NOT GETTING ALL THE PERFORMANCE I'M ENTITLED TO!



OK, YOU'VE ALL READ THE CHAPTER, SO LET'S REVIEW.



CALVIN, WHERE WAS THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE?



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humor me

by Izzy Gesell

Graves Avenue is a very short street in Northampton. The word "avenue" usually sparks images of a wide, urban thoroughfare lined with streets or shops; a boulevard that hosts people passing through or passing time. At any given moment, the pace of a true avenue is as varied as a well-stocked aquarium. From this perspective, Graves is as much an avenue as catsup is a vegetable, because Graves is not a broad road. It is a rather narrow, dead-end street.

But "avenue" can also mean a "way of access," or "a channel for pursuing a desired object." By using either of these definitions, the name may as well be Graves Elysee, because this truncated off-shoot of Market St. is the Ellis Island of Northampton. Most newcomers to the Paradise of America pass through this place where lives, dreams, and patience are nurtured. Everybody now in town has either lived on the street or known someone who has.

In Northampton, genealogies are traced not on family trees but on city maps listing rental apartments. Try this experiment next time you're at a Noho party where there are a number of people who have been in town for a few years. Ask for a show of hands from those who have some connection to Graves Ave., and you are as likely to find a person who lived there ten years ago as you are the ex-lover of someone residing there now. Don't be surprised to discover the furniture you are sitting on used to be in a Graves Ave. apartment. The Graves way is not as mysterious as it might seem. The exquisite yin-yang of this street guarantees that just when you're finished using something, someone else on the block needs that object at that precise moment. The archetypal Graves Ave. story goes like this: A guy brought an old couch to the dumpster at the Salvation Army one morning and went shopping downtown. When he returned to his Graves Ave. apartment that afternoon, his sofa was on his next door neighbor's porch, and it never looked better. If Martha Stewart ever goes grunge, she'll buy a place on Graves.

During the Reagan years, newcomers were drawn to Northampton by promises of gold in the streets, a healthy life for themselves and a real estate market modeled on the game of Monopoly. Jettisoned from the crime, dirt, fear and bad influences of the metropolitan blight where they had grown up, many immigrants to the Valley landed on Graves. The sight of Joe's Cafe guarding this portal of possibilities signaled the beginning of a new life in America, and was as inspiring to these expatriates as the Statue of Liberty had been to previous generations of refugees.

These days, a lifetime later if you count in real estate-agent years, it's not unusual to see cars plastered with Hilltown dump stickers or Vermont vanity plates slowly cruise the "avenue." Inside, moms and dads point out landmarks of personal historical significance to their kids, who only see yucky windows, porches and backyards.

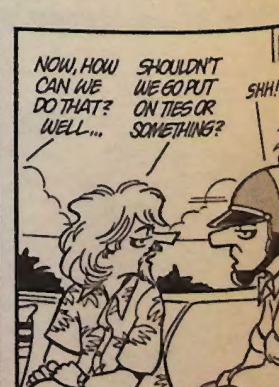
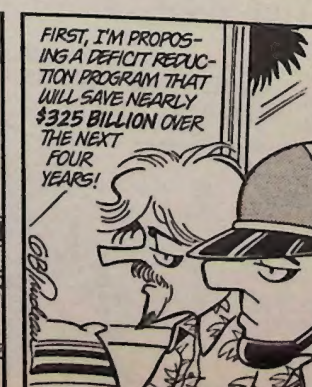
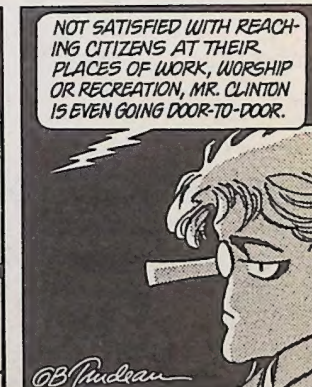
Along with the urban fugitives came matriculated students, recent graduates, and mid-course dropouts from area schools. All realized the best education in the region could be had at the Valley's equivalent of New York's Lower East Side. Among the run-down dorms of Graves, the 6th College, they were offered the same existence that greeted the Europeans in NYC: a tenement look to a life lived in close proximity to many others, an acceptance of various lifestyles and little or no parking.

The easiest to spot downtown were the ex-city dwellers. Every so often, even in mid-stride, they would stop to inhale a gulp of air. Rolling it around in their mouth, chest, and nose, the atmosphere was savored like the finest wine. Little children and adults alike were amazed to see store windows unencumbered by gates or security locks. As one early immigrant, gazing into a shop filled with stereo components, remarked to his translator, "Yo! Dose tings real, or plastic like da food in da windas of a Japanese restaurant?"

"They're real," the translator chuckled and took his charge by the arm. "Come," he said. "Let's practice saying 'hi' to strangers."

Doonesbury

BY G.B. TRUDEAU





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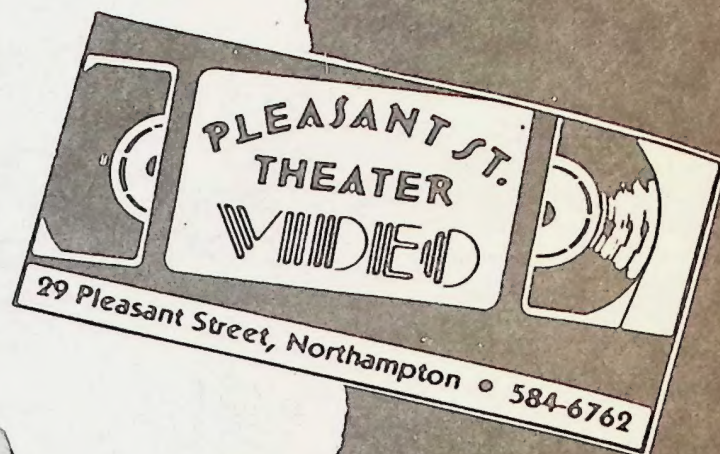
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